

# Basalt Town Council considers domestic abuse shelter for Response

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A draft rendition of Response's proposed domestic abuse shelter in Basalt.

*Courtesy of Chris Bendon, BendonAdams and 2757 design co.*

The only organization to serve domestic violence survivors in the upper Roaring Fork Valley faces its first test for a new shelter development in Basalt on Tuesday.

Response, which currently operates out of an office near Aspen Valley Hospital, is looking to expand emergency temporary housing offerings for its clients — survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

The Basalt Town Council will consider approving an amendment to the planned unit development for 325 E. Cody Lane, Lot H of the Basalt Business Center East. The amendment would add “domestic violence shelter” as a special review use for the property. If it passes, as expected, the town will schedule another public hearing and second hearing.

Shannon Meyer, executive director of Response, said the organization’s current temporary housing supply does not meet community needs. Response owns one unit and holds the lease for two others in the Roaring Fork Valley, but it is not enough. She said they served 13 clients and 14 children in the transitional housing units this year so far, and that there is almost always a waiting list for the units.

“And for us, a waiting list isn’t just like, ‘I’m in this great situation, I’ll move there when I can.’ They’re staying in an abusive home until they have a safe place to go to, they’re waiting to leave,” Meyer said.

The new shelter would serve as the primary office for Response, with the downstairs level comprising conference rooms, offices, meeting spaces plus food and clothing pantries. An ADA accessible unit for survivors would also be downstairs. Upstairs, there would be four units with their own bathrooms and kitchenettes to house an adult and up to three kids, two units for a single survivor or spillover space for a larger family, plus a communal kitchen and living area.

“It’s just a much more humane, I guess, trauma-informed way to live,” Meyer said, “[than] the old model where it’s dorm rooms and shared rooms, you know. People get privacy to heal.”

Survivors and their families would be able to stay in the transitional housing units for up to three months, just like the housing assistance program Response currently offers. While in transitional housing, Response works with survivors to secure next steps. Improving employment, assisting with communication with landlords and working to raise credit scores are all part of that process, Meyer said.

When Response first faced the Basalt Planning Department, Meyer said, they faced some community pushback. But building a shelter that is known and visible to the community would actually be safer for survivors, she added.

“The community knows where it is, the police know where it is, the fire department, emergency services, community policing, essentially. We’re going to all keep this place safe,” Meyer said. “And we’re going to elevate domestic violence in people’s awareness. People will not be able to help something they don’t know about.”

Planned security features for the building include cameras, pass code protected doors, panic buttons and an attached caretaker unit.

In the Roaring Fork Valley, the illusion of mountain paradise can mask distress. Meyer said she hears all the time that something like domestic abuse could not happen here.

“I think there’s this kind of happiness paradox that we have in the valley where people look around, and it looks like everybody’s doing so well and so happy and living these glorious lives,” she said. “If you are in an abusive relationship, it’s hard to admit to your friends, your co-workers that this is happening to you. There’s a stigma around it. And I think that’s another way that having a public facing shelter in the community [is to acknowledge]: This is here. Be on the lookout in your own life and your friends’ lives in your employees lives.”

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, call Response’s 24/7 crisis helpline: 970.925.SAFE (7233).

*Correction: An earlier version of this article stated there will be seven units for survivors on the second floor. There will be six units upstairs and one ADA unit downstairs. This change is now reflected in the article.*